

## Linde sworn in as Superior Court Judge



**Washington State Supreme Court Justice Gerry Alexander and nine other judges applaud after John O. Linde is sworn in as the first judge in the newly created San Juan County Superior Court jurisdiction.**

*posted 02/12/2008*

One hundred years after the citizens "built the little courthouse on the hill", the first judge in the San Juan County Superior Court Jurisdiction was sworn in. "The training wheels have come off," said newly sworn in Superior Court Judge John O. Linde.

The ceremony, held in front of an overflow crowd in the Superior Courtroom, was presided over by State Supreme Court Justice Gerry Alexander who administered the oath of office. Linde's 35-year legal career made him superbly qualified, Alexander said.



"It is a wonderful job you are about to embark on," he said. "I can't promise you'll never be reversed. I can tell you the Appellate Court is not right because they are smarter. They are right because they are last."

Prior to the establishment of its own judicial district, San Juan County was a "foster child" of other counties. Alexander recounted the history. In 1889 it was part of Whatcom County's, then was switched over to Skagit, then back to Whatcom. For 65 years it remained under Whatcom county's jurisdiction. From 1970 until the recent change San Juan County and Island County shared a jurisdiction.

Judge Vickie Churchill, a Superior Court judge serving the islands for the past 12 years, worked to split the two jurisdictions. Once the two local governments agreed. State legislation had to be passed in order for the jurisdiction to be formed. Churchill said, "This is a momentous and happy occasion for San Juan County. It fits with the independence and self-sufficiency of the island residents."



Judge Alan Hancock is the other judge who has presided over San Juan County Superior Court. He is a close friend of the Linde family and shared memories. He first met Linde when they were trying a murder case in Island County. Hancock was a deputy prosecutor. Linde, a defense attorney, was using the battered woman defense. "He conducted himself in the highest manner," Hancock said. Both men praised Judge Patrick for his handling of the case, one of the first dealing with the battered woman defense.



On a lighter note, Hancock said they both had children involved in sports and would see each other when Coupeville and Friday Harbor competed. They also swapped tales of umpiring, something they both did.

"I'm leaving here, with nothing but the fondest memories of my work here as a judge," said Hancock. "This is one of the world's beautiful, captivating places. I'm passing the torch to one of the very best...I'm proud to call John my brother."



Linde was the last to speak. Looking out at the crowd he said, "This is overwhelming, usually in this situation someone has died, the person doesn't stand up. I feel I should just lay down." He thanked both Judges Hancock and Churchill for their service to the county. "The quality of justice dispensed was unparalleled," he said. "It presents a challenge for me... I promise you to work every day to be the kind of judge Socrates expected and you deserve."

He thanked Churchill who "singlehandedly got the law passed." which established the separated jurisdiction. He noted his 30-year friendship with Hancock and their mutual respect for the late Judge Patrick.

District Court Judge Stewart Andrew, who succeeded Linde; Carla Higginson, "a great speaker and friend"; and all the friends and supporters who took him on plane rides during the interview process were thanked.

His most emotional thanks went to his wife Carol Linde. He recounted their move to San Juan Island. He accepted and job and agreed to start the next day without consulting his wife who was working two part-time jobs and attending UW. He renegotiated and started two days later.





**Island County Superior Court Judge Alan Hancock performed the robing ceremony.**







**Judging runs in the family. Linde's sister, Barbara Linde is the Chief Presiding Judge of King County District Court. Her husband, Gregory Canova, is a King County Superior Court Judge.**



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### **Linde becomes part of county's history**

*posted 12/21/2007*

The day after his appointment as Superior Court Judge was announced, John Linde was finding it slow going to get to the second floor of the Courthouse. Congratulations and hugs from county staff and members of the public and a brief interview delayed him for a few minutes.

For a history buff, being appointed as the first ever judge in the newly created San Juan

County Superior Court District, is a "tremendous honor," he said. "Just standing here in this 100 year old Courthouse today is neat."

Linde said the immediate tasks facing him are daunting. He's confident about the doing the work of the Superior Court Judge. He has served as a pro tem judge and was District Court Judge for years before stepping down.

Closing up his law practice, transferring clients and cases will be challenging. Some of his employees have been with him for 21 years.

Linde will attend a week-long Judicial Collge beginning on Jan. 18.

Gov. Gregoire called Linde directly on Tuesday, Dec. 18 and let him know her decision. She apologized for taking so long. He said he saw her on the TV news every night dealing with much bigger issues - ferries and floods.

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## **Thank yous from Linde**

### **By John O. Linde**

I am both honored and humbled by the confidence our Governor has shown in me by appointing me Superior Court Judge for San Juan County. I want to commend Governor Gregoire and her General Counsel Richard Mitchell for the exhaustive (and sometimes exhausting) process utilized in making judicial appointments. Part of that process was carried out through interviews with minority bar association judicial evaluation committees. A diverse group of disinterested persons had an opportunity to interview the candidates and rate their qualifications. The citizens of San Juan County also had an opportunity to voice their opinions.

To those who encouraged and supported me throughout the entire process, my sincere thanks. I will not betray the confidence you have shown in me. To those who supported our Prosecutor, or for whatever reason opposed my appointment, I promise each of you that I will carry out the duties of Superior Court Judge in a fair, consistent, and dignified manner. I will decide matters brought before me based on the law, allowing neither sympathy nor prejudice to influence me.

And to my clients, and more than that my friends, who I have worked with over these past 35 years, I will not abandon you. I am in the process of making arrangements for the smooth transition of my practice. I will be in contact with each of you in the coming weeks. Deciding to pursue the judgeship, knowing that if successful I would have to give up my practice, was the hardest decision I have ever made. Had the Governor not appointed me to the bench I would have been happy to continue representing each of you for the next 20 years.

I look forward to serving the citizens of San Juan County as your Superior Court Judge and will work hard to uphold the standards set by Judges Churchill and Hancock.

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## **Gov. Gregoire names John O. Linde San Juan County Superior Court Judge**

*posted 12/19/2007*

**PRESS RELEASE:** Gov. Chris Gregoire today announced the appointment of John O. Linde as San Juan County Judge, a newly created full-time position. Linde's appointment is effective Jan. 1, 2008.

Previously, San Juan and Island counties shared judges.

"As a resident of Friday Harbor for 35 years, John has a history with San Juan County that will be important in this new position," said Gov. Gregoire. "I'm pleased to appoint someone to the bench with the depth of professional and personal experience that John has in that area."

Linde's previous judicial experience includes being a San Juan County District Court judge for 21 years, as well as court commissioner and Superior Court judge pro tem.

"I am delighted with Governor Gregoire's appointment of John Linde," said Judge Alan Hancock of the Island and San Juan County Judicial District. "She has made a wise and thoughtful choice. The people of San Juan County deserve the very best, and John is the very best."

Judge Vickie I. Churchill, also on the bench in the Island and San Juan County Judicial District, said, "John Linde is an excellent choice for this historic occasion, the first judge for San Juan County Superior Court. John will serve the citizens of San Juan County with honor and distinction for many years to come."

Linde has been principal in the Law Offices of John O. Linde in Friday Harbor since 1987. He specializes in general law practice, with emphasis on real estate; land use and permitting; estate planning, wills and trusts; guardianship; probate, family law; small business formation; and civil and criminal litigation.

Linde was admitted to the Washington State Bar in 1972 and the Oregon State Bar in 2002.

Linde is a current board member of the Friday Harbor Athletic Association and the San Juan Golf and Country Club. He is a past board member of the Inter Island Medical Center, San Juan Community Theatre and San Juan Little League.

He received his Juris Doctorate from Willamette University College of Law in 1972 and a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from the University of Washington in 1969.

Linde and his wife, Carol, have been married 37 years. They have two children, Brian and Kristen.

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## **County may get its own Superior Court Judge**

**Story by Sharon Kivisto**

*posted 12/20/2006*

San Juan County Courthouse's second century may include its own judge. The county Council decided to ask the state legislature to split the current joint Island/San Juan Counties judicial district into two separate judicial districts.

If the state legislature agrees, voters in San Juan County will elect one Superior Court Judge to hear cases in the county. Island County would have two Superior Court judges. Now voters in both counties elect the two judges - currently Vickie Churchill and Alan Hancock - who serve the district.

County Administrator Pete Rose told the council the workload for the court is enough to justify three judges. The council could have chosen to ask the legislature for a third judge for the combined district. Asked for his recommendation, Rose said, "My recommendation is to go for local control."

Attorney John Linde said, "13 of the 39 counties in Washington are served by one judge. I don't think we've ever had our own judge. I think it is the best opportunity given Judge Churchill's position." Churchill is the president of the Superior Court Judges' Association and supports the plan.

Attorney Bill Weissinger opposed the plan, preferring the county ask for a third judge instead. "My concern is not actual impartiality, but perceived impartiality. It is a critical issue." If a lawyer believes the judge can't be impartial, a different judge can be requested.

Attorney Carla Higginson said, "If we had our own judge we could get to trial a lot more quickly. Now we have to mesh with Island county. It would help citizens having a judge here on a daily basis."